

## **Boston - Montreal High Speed Rail Corridor** **Alternate Alignment Feasibility and Planning Study**

### **PROJECT ABSTRACT**

The State of Vermont, with the participation of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and State of Connecticut, is conducting the *Boston-Montreal High-Speed Rail Corridor Alternate Alignment Feasibility and Planning Study* (BMHSR) to identify upgrades and improvements along the Boston to Montreal corridor, via Springfield, MA, and White River Junction, VT,. The plan will study the implementation of intercity passenger rail service along this routing through the application of capacity, speed, reliability, and safety upgrades to the Inland Route between Boston and Springfield, MA, the Knowledge Corridor between Springfield, MA and the Massachusetts/Vermont border, the New England Central Railroad (NECR) mainline between the the Massachusetts/Vermont border and the US/Canada border, and the Canadian National (CN) line between the US/Canada border and Montreal, QC.

### **BACKGROUND**

The BMHSR Corridor was designated by U.S. Transportation Secretary Rodney E. Slater on October 11, 2000 as a high-speed rail corridor as part of the “Northern New England Corridor,” with a hub at Boston and two spokes: one to Montreal, QC, Canada, via Concord, NH, and the other to Portland/Lewiston-Auburn, ME. Subsequently, issued grant was awarded for studying the Boston-Montreal portion of the Northern New England High Speed Rail Corridor and an initial study for the alignment through Concord was completed successfully in April 2003. FRA then approved a grant for a subsequent, more detailed study effort on September 10, 2003, however, New Hampshire decided at that time to no longer participate in the respective planning effort, which halted progress on the Boston to Montreal corridor study. As such, the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) has revised the project scope to study an alternate alignment for the Boston-Montreal corridor utilizing the Inland Route tracks from Boston to Springfield, MA, with the route then turning north along the Knowledge Corridor (from Springfield to East Northfield, MA), and up then through Vermont to White River Junction, where the rail line rejoins the original federally designated high speed rail alignment to Montreal.

Separate from the VTrans earmark to study the Boston-Montreal corridor, Congress provided a different earmark for studying the Inland Route (the rail line connecting Boston-Springfield-New Haven), which was designated as part of the Northern New England High-Speed Rail Corridor in the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2005 (PL 108-447)* on December 8, 2004. Given the overlap of projects along the Inland Route Corridor, it is important to prevent duplication and promote coordination of efforts. VTrans and MassDOT have agreed that the best way to accomplish this is to conduct the BMHSR Study and the Inland Route Study under a single consultant contract funded through the funds from both VT and MA grants. This will ensure that the evaluation of infrastructure improvements and future operations will incorporate both proposed passenger rail services.

Through these efforts, the *Boston-Montreal High-Speed Rail Corridor Alternative Alignment Feasibility and Planning Study* will support further evaluation of passenger services for Vermont Massachusetts and Connecticut, as presented in the 2030 Vision Plan prepared by the three States and Amtrak.

## **GENERAL OBJECTIVE**

This study will examine the implementation and operation of intercity passenger rail service on the corridor between Boston, MA, and Montreal, QC, Canada, via Springfield, MA, and White River Junction, VT, along with the corresponding ridership potential and infrastructure improvements to develop NEPA compliant documentation for a BMHSR Service Development Plan (SDP.) The corridor study will focus on incremental infrastructure improvement alternatives that will seek to maximize the use of the existing rail corridors. This study will build upon the current effort to upgrade the Knowledge Corridor, which is being led by MassDOT, as well as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funded improvements to the NECR line through Vermont.

## **PROJECT COORDINATION**

This study will be integrated into the companion effort led by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to guide the development of the Boston-Springfield- New Haven High Speed Rail Corridor (described in a separate statement of work), which shares common track between Boston, MA and Springfield, MA with the Boston-Montreal Alternate Alignment route. The combined project will be conducted through cooperative agreements between the VTrans and the MassDOT (as managing partners), and the Vermont Agency of Transportation and the FRA (as Grantee/Grantor). A steering committee – comprised of key members including VTrans, MassDOT, Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT), FRA, Amtrak, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), Metropolitan Transportation Authority Metro-North Railroad (Metro-North), CSX, NECR, Pan Am Railways (PAR) and CN, as well as other appropriate agencies and parties – will provide oversight, direction and primary product review for the study.